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SUBJECT: Bolivia CN Update January 2010

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[1](#)1. SUMMARY:

* Interdiction: Seizures in all categories except solid precursors and cocaine HCl labs declined compared to January 2008. (paras 2-7).

* Eradication: The GOB did not undertake eradication operations during the month. (para 8).

* Development and Training: NAS Director attended a graduation ceremony NAS-funded 10-day jungle operations orientation course for Bolivian CN Prosecutors and Assistants. The Directors of the Bolivian National Police (BNP) and Special Forces for the Fight Against Narcotics Trafficking (FELCN), together with the Vice Minister of Social Defense, assigned four BNP officers to lead the GOB's new CN polygraph unit. (paras 9-11).

* Trafficking in Persons: NAS and the BNP designated 30 BNP investigators to work in TIP's offices that will be opened in the coming months in six Bolivian border towns. (para 12).

* Prevention and Demand Reduction: The BNP's nine D.A.R.E. provincial coordinators participated in a leadership and management seminar in La Paz. (para 13).

* Aviation: NAS Helicopter and Small Wing Program (Red Devils) continued to urge the GOB to dedicate additional personnel to the unit. (para 14).

END SUMMARY.

Interdiction Statistics

12. January 2009 vs. January 2008: Seizures were generally down compared to the same period last year. CN police performed 9 percent fewer operations (903), during which they seized: 71 percent less cocaine HCl (.09 MT); 57 percent less cocaine base (1.10 MT); 76 percent less coca leaf (51.03 MT); 61 percent less marijuana (.09 MT); 16 percent less liquid precursors (136,966 liters); destroyed 61 percent fewer cocaine base labs (556); and 27 percent fewer maceration pits (556). CN units seized five percent more solid precursors (46.36 MT) and arrested 27 percent more suspects (294). CN units seized one cocaine HCl laboratory vs. none in January 2008. All statistics come from FELCN.

Interdiction Operations

13. In the first discovery of a "mega-lab" in 2010, on January 10 FELCN Santa Cruz discovered a cocaine HCl laboratory in full operation in the municipality of Cotoca, 10 kilometers from the city of Santa Cruz. CN forces arrested two people and seized dozens of bricks containing 6 kilograms of cocaine in one of the rustic buildings of the complex, and large amounts of chemicals in another building. FELCN reported that the mega-lab had the capacity to manufacture 50 kilograms of cocaine HCl per day.

14. FELCN Cochabamba on January 11 discovered a cocaine crystallization lab in Cala Trancani. The lab was converting cocaine base into cocaine HCl, and packaging approximately 10 kilograms of cocaine daily. Cocaine base sells for \$1,300 per kilo on the Bolivian market, while cocaine HCl sells for approximately \$2,300 per kilo. CN units arrested one person during the raid.

15. FELCN Cochabamba seized 96 kilograms of cocaine base during 10 operations conducted between January 21-25 in the Valle area of Cochabamba. The CN units also arrested nine people and seized four vehicles. In a January 21 operation, CN forces seized 36.7 kilograms hidden inside a bus. Three days later, units seized 36.95 kilograms of cocaine also hidden inside an interprovincial bus in the community of Quellumayu.

16. On January 26, FELCN Santa Cruz incinerated a cocaine factory located in Vaca Guzman, some 75 kilometers from the city of Santa Cruz. FELCN Santa Cruz director Jorge Romero said the factory was producing between 40 and 50 kilograms of cocaine base per week using Colombian technology, and noted that as recently as Friday, January 22, traffickers transported 50 kilograms from the factory. CN units also seized at the site: 350 liters of liquid precursors, 200 liters of gasoline (to be used in the cocaine production process); 8 barrels of chemical precursors, and a plethora of tools used on the manufacturing process.

17. FELCN's Controlled Substances Prosecutor's Office searched January 28 a Santa Cruz house owned by the Mayor of San Matias, Hubre Velarde. The remote town on the Brazilian border is a significant drug transit point for cocaine being shipped or flown to Brazil. The authorities, who had obtained a search warrant based on credible evidence that Velarde was involved in money laundering and drug trafficking, seized 105,000 Bolivianos (USD \$14,800). In his statement to the prosecutor, Velarde declared

that the moneys seized were proceeds from his cattle business and interest on a loan he had made.

Eradication

¶18. The GOB did not undertake eradication operations. As in past years, it will begin in February.

Training and Institutional Development

¶19. Forty-six CN prosecutors and assistants participated in a 10-day orientation course at the NAS-funded Garras school in Chimore, covering counternarcotics operations, land navigation, escape and evasion, basic first aid and jungle survival training. The course allowed the GOB prosecutors an opportunity to experience the type of working conditions that Bolivian CN forces must routinely endure, and helped give the prosecutors a sense of what to expect when they accompany CN forces on operations. On January 30, twenty-two members of the Bolivian coca eradication police (ECOPOL) completed a three-week Jungle Tactical Operation training course at Garras. NAS Director attended the January 30 graduation ceremonies.

¶110. On January 22, sixty-seven participants from the BNP completed a one-week Drug Investigator training course held in Potosi. BNP and NAS staff taught the course.

¶111. The National BNP commander, National FELCN Director and the Vice Minister for Social Defense selected four BNP officers to be assigned to the new CN polygraph unit. NAS has agreed to provide appropriate infrastructure and administrative support to this anti-corruption initiative. The four examiners received training and certification through a NAS-sponsored polygraph examiner training course. The unit will be responsible for providing polygraph examinations to all BNP officers working in the GOB's CN program.

Trafficking in Persons & Victim Assistance Programs

¶112. During January NAS worked with the BNP to select and designate 30 BNP investigators who will be assigned to the six new TIP offices that will be opened over the next 60 days in the border cities of Tarija, Desaguadero, Puerto Suarez, Cobija, Villazon & Yacuiba.

Prevention and Demand Reduction

¶113. From January 20-22 the nine Department Coordinators for the D.A.R.E. program participated in a leadership workshop in La Paz. The goal of the seminar was to improve the leadership and management skills of the D.A.R.E. officers (all members of the BNP), as part of a broader effort to solidify the position of the D.A.R.E. program within the BNP and to expand the program's reach in Bolivia.

Aviation

The NAS Helo and Small Wing Program (Red Devils Task Force) continued to urge the GOB to assign additional personnel to the unit, in order to ensure the full and safe operation of the program.. The NAS C130 Program (Black Devils) flew three missions to the northern city of Cobiya to evacuate 276 soldiers who had been stranded due to flooding.
Creamer